

March 30, 2000

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Ms. Shirley Watkins
Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services
U.S. Department of Agriculture

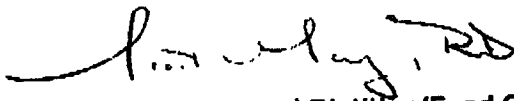
Ms. Watkins,

I wanted to take this opportunity to comment on the proposed changes outlined in Food Distribution 2000: A message from USDA's commodity improvement council. I think that the council did an excellent job of identifying many of the obstacles that occur when receiving and utilizing commodity products. The biggest issue is being overwhelmed with one particular food item all at once, and then having to store the product for extended amounts of time. I was particularly excited about the proposed best value contracting instead of contracts solely on lowest price. Allowing vendors to use commercial labels and substitute commodity products would greatly benefit the entire distribution program. The proposed seamless commodity distribution would allow for smoother ordering, receiving, storing and utilization of product. I appreciate the council's initiative to transform the commodity distribution program.

I also wanted to mention the terrific customer service that I have received from the staff at Connecticut's Department of Administrative Services. Since last year I have noticed a tremendous improvement in the way commodities are delivered and in the way that complaints/concerns are handled. DAS had implemented a set date for commodity delivery that has been exact for 5 out of 7 times, with the remaining deliveries off by 1 or 2 days. The date of delivery is communicated at least a month in advance. The staff of DAS have responded in a timely manner to any questions or concerns that I have raised and followed up to ensure that the issue was taken care of.

Thank you again for this initiative.

Sincerely,



Scott Gay, Registered Dietitian/Food Service Director